Scottish National Portrait Gallery opens following £17.6million transformation

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The project, the first major refurbishment in the Gallery's 120-year history, has restored much of the architect's original vision, opening up previously inaccessible parts of the building and increasing the public space by more than 60%. It has also added a range of new facilities that will utterly transform visitors' experience of the Gallery.

The Collection
The SNPG opened in 1889 as the world's first purpose-built portrait gallery and is now an iconic landmark in the heart of Scotland's capital. Over the past century, its collection of portraits has grown to become one of the largest and finest in the world, comprising 3,000 paintings and sculptures, 25,000 prints and drawings. This distinctive red sandstone building also houses the national collection of photography with some 38,000 historic and modern photographs.

For the first time since the Gallery was established, access to the exhibition spaces on all three levels has been opened up, while the restoration of the magnificent suite of top-lit galleries on the upper floor has created one of the most impressive display spaces in Scotland. As a result, a much greater proportion of the collection will be on show, bringing to light a wealth of art works that has been, until now, largely hidden from view.

The New Displays
The new displays will follow a chronological pattern but will also focus on various themes and subjects in greater depth, exploring the richness of Scottish history and culture in a more cohesive and interconnected way, and telling the story of its people and places through the lens of the visual arts. Individual portraits - from Mary, Queen of Scots to Dr Who actor Karen Gillan will be set in a broader context of thematic displays ranging from the Reformation to the present day.

Supported by loans from other collections, and by a fresh approach to information and interpretation, including trails, themes and an interactive touchscreen gallery, this new presentation of the permanent collection will help bring to life the portraits and the stories behind them, as well as exploring many facets of Scottish life and the nation's wider influence throughout the world. The displays are designed to change and evolve so that over time, the public will have access to different aspects of this extraordinarily rich and diverse collection.

The Photography Gallery
The new Portrait Gallery will, for the first time, include a major space dedicated to showcasing the Gallery's unparalleled holdings of Scottish and international photography, as well as newly commissioned work by contemporary photographers. The significance of photography will be emphasised throughout the Gallery, where it will be integrated into many
of the displays.

The Contemporary Gallery
On the ground floor, the Contemporary Gallery will bring the story up to date, with a series of displays from the Gallery's collection of contemporary portraits, special loan exhibitions, and commissions from some of Scotland's most celebrated contemporary artists. The inaugural display

will feature *Missing*, a video installation by Graham Fagen, commissioned as part of a unique partnership between the Portrait Gallery and the National Theatre of Scotland.

The Building
The refurbishment of the Gallery, a magnificent Arts and Crafts building designed by the celebrated architect Sir Robert Rowand Anderson, has been overseen by Glasgow-based architects Page \ Park. Their sensitive design has restored many of the building's original features, which had been hidden behind an accumulation of twentieth-century interventions while incorporating essential modern services, such as the great glass lift that will take visitors up through the heart of the building. The remodeling of the ground floor has improved circulation for visitors, as well as providing an open and airy view along the entire length of the building. Office space has been cleverly accommodated in a new mezzanine level and, for the first time there is an education suite, with a seminar room and studio space. In addition, the Gallery's ever-popular café and shop have doubled in size.

The refurbished Gallery will also make use of a number of pioneering techniques to achieve a significant reduction in energy consumption. Using the mass of the building, new insulation and sophisticated controls to permit slow changes over wider ranges of temperature and humidity, the gallery spaces will use 42% less energy that previously. In addition, the Gallery will be lit by cutting-edge, low-energy LEDs (light-emitting diodes) which combine economy with excellent colour rendering qualities.

The Learning Programme
An extensive and dynamic learning programme complementing the new displays, called Portrait of the Nation: Live! will be an integral part of the re-invention of the SNPG. This has been devised to engage a very broad range of visitors, both on and off-site, as well as on-line. It will help to realise our vision of the Portrait Gallery as a unique, responsive and essential portrayal of Scotland that will stimulate, engage and build relationships with audiences both at home and abroad.

Funding
The £17.6million refurbishment has been funded by generous contributions from the Scottish Government, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Monument Trust and a number of charitable bodies. This has been supported by an innovative and engaging public campaign which has given donors the chance to sponsor historical figures in the stunning frieze created by William Hole in the Gallery's Great Hall; individual stars in Hole's mural mapping of the night sky, which adorns the Hall's ceiling; or to include a photograph in *Put Yourself in the Picture*, an electronic donor screen and online gallery.

John Leighton, Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland, commented: "The new SNPG will be a superb setting to showcase rich traditions of Scottish art and photography; it is also a forum where issues of history and identity come to life through art; perhaps, above all, it is a place where individual and collective stories and memories come together to create a fascinating and imaginative portrait of a nation".

James Holloway, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, added: "Scotland's national portraits at last have a home worthy of them. Our great iconic building now looks tremendous and is the perfect showcase for our rich and unique collection".

First Minister Alex Salmond said: "The Scottish National Portrait Gallery celebrates well-known Scots from throughout the ages; whether they are some of our greatest thinkers or our modern actors and actresses.
All aspects of Scottish life and achievement are encapsulated in the many artworks which will now be displayed to their

utmost as part of this ambitious £17.6m restoration project. The improvements to the magnificent building will allow visitors to experience much of what architect Sir Robert Rowand Anderson envisaged in his original design as it continues to showcase Scotland's greatest asset - its people".

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said: "The restoration of this magnificent building will allow visitors to appreciate its architect's original vision while showcasing Scotland at its very best. The opportunity to view substantially more of the Gallery's treasures and take part in imaginative interpretation trails and education activities will delight visitors of all ages. HLF is proud to be a partner in this magnificent transformation which is set to make a significant contribution to our culture, society and tourist economy".

Further information
National Galleries of Scotland's press office on 0131 624 6325 or 6247/6314/6332 or email: pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org.

Entry to the new Portrait Gallery will be completely free.